



The Secretary of Energy  
Washington, DC 20585

January 19, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT ELEMENTS

FROM: BILL RICHARDSON *Bill Richardson*

SUBJECT: Managing the Release of Surplus and Scrap Materials

Over the last year, the Department has grappled with how to improve its management and release of surplus and scrap material. Our reviews have not identified any evidence that the public might be harmed by releases from our sites, but we have determined that there is a need to improve radiation monitoring, independent verification, and record keeping and reporting. We must also better engage the public in our decision making and help them better understand our release practices.

There is clearly expressed public concern and interest regarding the procedures and requirements under which materials leave our sites for recycling, reuse, or other disposition. I have taken steps to address these concerns while we improve our release policies and procedures. Last January, I placed a moratorium on the unrestricted release of volumetrically contaminated metals pending a decision by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission whether to establish national standards. In July, I suspended the unrestricted release for recycling of all metals from radiation areas within Department of Energy (DOE) facilities until improvements in release criteria and related information management have been implemented. Both these prohibitions remain in effect.

The Department has, over the last several months, been developing procedures which, when implemented, would allow unrestricted releases for recycling of metals without detectable radioactive contamination. Internal and public comments on these proposed changes raised significant and substantive issues. Consequently, additional deliberation is necessary, and the new requirements are not complete.

Moreover, in light of these comments, I have determined that the Department should prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS). This will allow an open, healthy discussion of the broadest range of concerns associated with the unrestricted release of materials from our sites. The Office of Environmental Management, in coordination with other Departmental elements, should prepare a Notice of Intent to begin this EIS, to be published within 60 days.



Printed on recycled paper